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School Bus Safety

School bus safety is important for everyone to be aware of – whether you're a child, parent or driver. The start of the school year means children will be waiting curbside to be picked up, either by the traditional yellow bus or a private van.

While protecting the child's physical safety is foremost, parents who are considering using a private school bus service to transport their young ones should become familiar with the rules and regulations governing private vans. The Miami-Dade County For-Hire Transportation Section of the Department of Regulatory and Economic Resources (RER) Department enforces laws that require chauffeurs to be licensed, trained and insured, and their vehicles registered, insured and inspected.

All private motor vehicles used for the transportation of children to and from public and private schools, kindergartens, nursery schools and day care centers are considered private school buses. They must be inspected annually or semi-annually depending on seating capacity of the vehicle. Private school buses with a seating capacity of less than 24 must be inspected semi-annually, while those which seat 24 or more must be inspected annually.

The drivers of these vehicles must have a chauffeur's registration from the For-Hire Transportation Section.

Consumer Tips:

- **Unregistered private school bus operators.** If you see a flyer or other advertisement for a bargain-priced private school bus service, be cautious before committing because they may not be licensed to operate. Find out if you can trust the person behind the wheel with your most precious cargo – your child – by contacting the Miami-Dade County Business Affairs Division at 305-375-3677.
- **Drivers.** Before drivers are issued a license, they must meet eligibility qualifications such as driving record and criminal background checks. They must also pass training courses conducted by trainers of the For-hire transportation section. This is done to ensure the safety of children on board as well as the safety of others on the road.
- **Vehicle safety inspections.** Don't let your child hop into just any vehicle. Look for an inspection certificate attached to the windshield. The certificate states that the private school bus was determined to be safe at the time of the inspection and provides an expiration date. Vehicles are inspected for compliance with specific vehicle standards contained in the County Code. These include, but are not limited to brakes, tires, headlights, turn signals, horn, brake lights, cleanliness, and other safety and cosmetic components, including first aid kits.

To help prevent school-transportation accidents and to ensure a safe ride to school, below are some school bus safety tips provided by SAFE KIDS Coalition - for both children and drivers.

- **Kids:**

- Look both ways before crossing the street and do so at a crosswalk or corner
- Don't enter the street from between parked cars or from behind bushes or shrubs
- Arrive at the stop at least five minutes before the bus is scheduled to arrive
- While on the bus, remain seated at all times and keep the aisles clear
 - Do not throw objects
 - Do not shout or distract the driver unnecessarily
 - Keep head and arms inside the bus at all times
- Wait until the bus comes to a complete stop before exiting
- Be aware of the driver's blind spot (10 feet around the bus) when walking away from the bus
- Cross the street at least 10 feet in front of the bus
- Never pick up items that fell under the bus; instead, ask the bus driver for help

- **Drivers:**

- Slow down in or near school or residential areas, and be sure to come to a complete stop at all intersections
- Scan between parked cars and other objects for signs that children could dart into the road
- Always stop for school buses that are loading and unloading students; it's the law
- Drive with your headlights on – even during the day – so children and other drivers can see you

For additional consumer tips, or to check the complaint history of a company, file a complaint or ask consumer-related questions, contact the **Miami-Dade Business Affairs Division at 305-375-3677**. You can also log on to the department website at www.miamidade.gov/business.

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